

The downside of overseas travel

Travel has never been quicker or cheaper. It is now easier to travel, and so easier to visit and understand the rest of the world. However, this new-found opportunity has definite disadvantages. Overseas travel is not always beneficial.

Firstly, overseas travel can harm your bank balance. Tickets are expensive. Flying is perhaps the dearest way to take a trip. Even though it is sometimes possible to buy cheap tickets, it is not always easy to plan far enough ahead. Sea journeys, which used to be cheaper, are now limited to expensive cruises. Trains are often as costly as flying, and you cannot use them to go overseas. If you decide to travel independently, you face the costs of petrol and car-hire when you arrive at your destination. In addition, accommodation costs are high — even if you stay in budget lodgings. Day-to-day expenses are also higher than if you stayed at home.

Secondly, travelling by plane over long distances is often uncomfortable and tiring. The problems begin with waiting in line to check in your luggage; then you must wait to clear customs and immigration. Once on board, the constant vibration of the engines causes drowsiness. Unless you travel first or business class, you will find air travel cramped and uncomfortable. There is not enough leg room, and you cannot sleep properly because you have to stay sitting up. Furthermore, sitting in one position for a long time is hazardous to health — deep vein thrombosis and dehydration are two possible dangers. Air-sickness is another common problem, as is lifting heavy luggage.

Furthermore, overseas travel can be dangerous. While there are strict regulations which govern the standard of aircraft maintenance, accidents do happen. We occasionally hear of mid-air crashes, engine failure or other problems. In addition, there is always the threat of high-jacking. This problem has worsened as activists have realised the opportunities that are available for them to make their wishes known.

In addition, if you do not know another language, you may not learn much about the places you are visiting. In many really interesting places, the ones that are completely different from your country, people will not know your language. Also, in some countries the writing is in a different script. If you cannot read, you cannot easily find information about reaching a destination, or about the things you should see. If you cannot speak some local language, people will not be able to help you or explain things to you.

Finally, sightseeing in foreign countries may not help you to understand other cultures. Of course, seeing interesting buildings and monuments will give you some basic factual information about a country's history. You can look at the scenery and

learn a little about its geography. You can find out about the food by looking in the shops and markets. You can even read about the culture in guide books. However, the real 'heart' of a country is found through meeting its people. They are the ones who can tell you the stories that accompany the history. They can explain about the different seasons and festivals, and give you background information about what you observe. They can show you how to cook traditional dishes. Only through spending time with the local people can you begin to understand what and how they think. Sightseeing tours do not always make this possible.

In conclusion, while overseas travel certainly has many advantages, it also has its downside. If you want to travel, you need to be aware of the potential difficulties. Then you can plan to meet and overcome them, so that you gain maximum benefit from your time overseas.